

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated January 3, 2007. Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 26 and 27 are presented for examination, of which Claims 1, 6 and 15 are in independent form. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5, 579,126 (Otsuka) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,598,533 (Yokota) and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,825,854 (Larson). Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Otsuka, in view of Yokota and Larson as applied to Claim 1, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,295,181 (Kuo).

Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1 is directed to an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network. The image reading apparatus includes: (1) generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal; (2) selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses; (3) determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information; (4) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative; (5) output means for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus; (6) reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and (7) transmission control means for

controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Among other notable features of Claim 1 are: (1) determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information; and (2) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative.

Otsuka does not teach or suggest all of these features and, from the Office Action, it is understood that the Examiner does not disagree.

Otsuka relates to a facsimile apparatus which is linked to a local area network including two or more personal computers and operates on the local area network as a facsimile server for transmitting document files. The Otsuka system records the sending history of a user of a facsimile apparatus and only sends password information to the facsimile apparatus and not to a reception station of the document files. In the Otsuka system, there are three types of devices, a source station (one of a plurality of personal computers and/or an external station), a facsimile apparatus, and one of a plurality of reception devices. Otsuka discusses a log-in procedure to start a computer session, where the facsimile apparatus always requests a user to enter a user name and password on a source station, and receives the user name and password from the source station.

The Office Action cites Fig. 9, column 11, lines 10-15 and lines 45-50 as disclosing the determining means of Claim 1. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Initially, column 11, lines 5-10 makes clear that a log-in procedure “is performed to start a computer session

between one personal computer and the facsimile apparatus” (emphasis added). Thus, the log-in procedure Otsuka is not optional. Column 11, lines 10-15 (steps 601 and 601, Fig. 9) merely discusses that in the log-in procedure, the facsimile apparatus requests that the user enters the user name and password on the source station and receives the entered username and password from the source station. There is no hint or suggestion in this passage of a determination as to whether or not the input of management information is needed at all, much less a determination as to whether the selected external printing apparatus (i.e, the reception statement) needs input of user management information.

Indeed, the “determination means” of Claim 1 is present because the image reading apparatus is connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses and each external printing apparatus may be different in terms of whether or not input of user management information is needed. On the other hand, Otsuka does not even disclose a plurality of external printing apparatuses. Therefore, as a matter of course, it is neither possible nor necessary for the Otsuka system to disclose any “determining means,” as recited in Claim 1. Thus, Applicant submits that Otsuka is inappropriate as a main reference for Claim 1.

Column 11, lines 45-50 relates to an error message procedure that is performed when an error state of the facsimile apparatus due to a paper end, a paper jam or the like is detected. That passage merely discusses that an error message is transmitted from the facsimile machine to a computer and that “it is necessary that the user (or the authorized operator) has already performed a log-in procedure on the reception cite.” Again, there is no hint or suggestion in this passage of a determination as to whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information. Nor is there any hint or suggestion that the log-in

procedure may or may not be required, as the Office Action suggests on the top of page 5.

Therefore, Applicant has found nothing in Otsuka that would teach or suggest “determination means for determining whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information”, as recited in Claim 1.

Further, Applicant also disagrees with the suggestion on the bottom of page 4 of the Office Action that the determination means is obvious simply because one reference (Larson) teaches a fax machine that does not require a password and another (Otsuka) teaches a fax machine that requires a password. Thus, Larsen does not remedy the deficiencies of Otsuka in this regard.

The Office Action also cites column 11, lines 10-15 as disclosing the input control means of Claim 1. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Column 11, lines 10-15 (steps 601 and 601, Fig. 9) merely discusses that, in the log-in procedure, the facsimile apparatus requests that the user enter the user name and password on the source station, and receives the entered username and password from the source station. Since as discussed above, there is no disclosure of the determination means in Otsuka, there can be no disclosure of an input control unit for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative.

Further, Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Office Action’s statement (page 2) that “the program that accepts user input of management information” satisfies this claim element. First, Applicant does not believe that Otsuka discloses such a program. However, even if it did, a program accepting user input of management information is different from controlling the input of such information, as recited in Claim 1. Otsuka merely discloses

that a user of a facsimile apparatus (IFAX) is always required to input his/her login name or password information on a personal computer (PC1), and, unlike the structure recited in Claim 1, does not disclose a feature to control whether or not to input a user management information depending on a need of the selected external printing apparatus.

Accordingly, Applicant has found nothing in Otsuka that would teach or suggest “input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted, when the result of the determination indicates affirmative,” as recited in Claim 1.

Neither Yokotoa nor Larsen remedy the deficiencies of Otsuka. Yokota merely discloses a compound electronic apparatus having a general purpose personal computer function and an image scanner 22. Similarly, Larson merely discloses a plurality of computers connected to a plurality of facsimile apparatus. Neither of these references teaches or suggests the “determination means” or the “input control means” recited in Claim 1.

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant’s opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as a reference against Claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 1 is patentable over Otsuka, Yokota and Larsen, whether considered separately or in combination.

Independent Claims 6 and 15 are method and computer readable memory claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 1, and are believed to be patentable over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 1.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same

reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

This Amendment After Final Action is believed clearly to place this application in condition for allowance and, therefore, its entry is believed proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment After Final Action, as an earnest effort to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe that issues remain outstanding, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact Applicant's undersigned attorney in an effort to resolve such issues and advance the case to issue.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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